

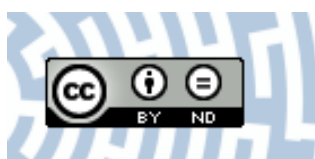


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Disabled youth facing the problem of unemployment and the challenges of education in life environment

Introduction

The analysis of individual development of every young person allows for noticing that the course of all developmental changes is determined by a real multitude of factors, such as: developmental potentialities, family and school situation, relations with peer group, and – in later periods – social and professional activeness. On one hand, they all constitute a powerful field of interaction; on the other – they become a platform for experiencing one's own potentialities, abilities and competences. If the above mentioned factors arrange unfavourably, the existing deficiencies, developmental barriers and their socio-psychological correlations will fortify their disturbing influence. However, if the environmental factors are oriented towards supporting individual development, some mechanisms and strategies of potential resourcefulness will be created, with full regard to the subject's chances and possibilities. In this case, favourable conditions will appear for both gaining independence and experiencing satisfaction in various areas of life dependently on the goals of the individual.

In the context of the above mentioned determinants, which take part in self-fulfillment, a special attention is drawn to the discussion on human disability. It is treated as a state which substantially disturbs (among other agents) the expected effects of social learning, as well as of existential and socio-cultural self-fulfillment. The notion of disability,

which refers (dependently on the applied perspective) to different types of disorders with various pathogenesis, comprises one common distinctive feature. This is the limited fulfillment of social demands due to significant restrictions in achieving the earlier mentioned independence¹. In case of disabled people, feeling the lack of independence may be manifested in many dimensions – from the level of somatic and physical ability (including also self-care), through the emotional aspect of managing in life, to independent fulfilling social roles or the satisfaction from one's own socio-economic status. What seems worth attention is the fact that the understanding and evaluation of the discussed category of functioning are significantly influenced by cultural conditions. This occurs because culture is a strong stimulant enhancing individual needs and expectations, which are shaped in the individual's relations with the environment where particular preferences exist, as well as a particular system of norms, values and social expectations.

Moreover, the situation of the disabled (the psycho-social conditions of their functioning and evaluation of life) can be viewed both from the individual (medical and psychological) and social perspective, with regard to the type and degree of disability, its duration and the individual's sex. The relation between dysfunction of the organism and the specificity of developmental processes, which take place especially in the cognitive and emotional-motivational area, can have a dual character. Direct influence of disability is usually associated with the occurrence of pathogenic changes which affect functioning of the organism (mainly in the neurogenic and metabolic field). Indirect influence might be illustrated through indicating the modification of inner influence² and the so called "mechanisms of emotional regulation"³. In practice, it turns

¹ M. Kościńska: *Oblicza upośledzenia /Faces of Disability/*. Warszawa 1998, PWN.

² Outer influence mainly consists of social (especially school) demands. It happens that they are not coherent with pupils' (intellectual and psycho-emotional) possibilities. Frequently, teachers' increasing requirements or inadequate demands strengthen the fear of failure, which is often manifested in anxiety, neurotic behaviour, or substitute defensive mechanisms.

³ Understanding the mechanisms of emotional regulation concerns situations in which illness, disability and the related lower developmental level constitute a source of strong negative emotions. These emotions are secondary causes of insufficient effects of cognitive activeness of the people deviating from the norm.

out that these are two significant elements which are important for the effectiveness of the educational process and broadly understood rehabilitation of the disabled. The influence dynamics of these processes, however, is determined by the character and range of the disability and most frequently occurs in the case of chronically ill people (immunologic and somatic diseases), as well as in youth with intellectual disability. This does not exclude the possibility of their likely occurrence as an objective state also with other developmental disorders. It also should be kept in mind that the disturbance of the ability and function, which takes place in the form of inner and outer (motor, sensory, somatic, and also mental) limitations of existence, results in specific difficulties in fulfilling the undertaken developmental tasks, centred around functioning at school, professional work⁴, and the participation in broadly understood culture.

The subject of this research was a group of young disabled people⁵ who face such important developmental tasks as school leaving and undertaking work. Due to the author's research interests, the analyses concern only these young people who are over 18, possess a particular level of education and face the problem of job seeking. This stage of entering adulthood is the next step towards self-perfection, better self-knowledge and familiarization with one's own abilities. It also leads to taking over the responsibility for oneself and one's life, not only currently, but also for further years. If young people view their situation as favourable, their intra-mental preventive methods are strengthened. These methods include defensive mechanisms which, on one hand, aim at minimizing the feeling of threat and inefficiency, and on the other, tend to support positive self-esteem and behaviour oriented towards the implementation of a particular task⁶. In that period, the vision of one's future is de-

⁴ T. Majewski: *Specyficzne problemy związane z pracą zawodową osób niepełnosprawnych* /*Specific problems related to professional work of the disabled*/. (In:) B. Szczepankowski, J. Milicki (eds): *Vademecum rehabilitacji. Osoby niepełnosprawne w środowisku lokalnym. Wyrównywanie szans* /*A Handbook of Rehabilitation. The disabled in local environment. Levelling of Chances*/. Warszawa 1999, Wyd. Centrum Badań i Rozwojowe Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych. p. 179.

⁵ The studies comprised a group of young people (aged 18 – 30) with regard to their level of education and the reasons of disability.

⁶ Among others, these mechanisms include: rationalization, compensation and transformation.

terminated by the factors which mark the prospects of development and fulfillment of important life goals, both currently and in the future.

The reports and observations of social life show that the effects of disability which concern fulfilling professional role are the most serious in the case of people with low education and qualifications, or without any qualifications. The results of the studies conducted by the Department of Work and Social Policy, published in 2003⁷, indicated that only 3.9% of the disabled had university-level education, 16.2% had post-secondary and secondary vocational education, 6.5% had general secondary, 25.2% basic vocational and 48.2% primary or incomplete primary education. It can be observed that the disabled population is characterized by constantly growing professional passivity, which particularly concerns people at productive age (also young adults)⁸. In the first quarter of 2005, among the disabled at productive age, there were only 23% of professionally active people and the remaining 77% were professionally passive ones⁹. This passiveness results from many factors, among which the lack of competence and qualifications of the people interested in undertaking work seems to rank as the most important (side by side with the type and extent of disability, or the reluctant attitudes of employers¹⁰). Undeniably, the disabled have really serious problems with finding jobs, they experience personal dilemmas, as well as social degradation and alienation. The actions undertaken to counteract this phenomenon turn out to be insufficient. If the situation does not change radically, the position of the disabled on the work market will also remain unchanged – the disturbed process of their adaptation to new macro-economic conditions will deepen further and may strengthen the feeling of alienation and abandoning professional activeness. That is why, what seems important is the educational support for the disabled with

⁷ www.mpips.gov.pl, updated: March 2005.

⁸ In 2004, these people constituted 59% of the disabled population. This group included 72% of professionally passive, 14% of professionally active, 11% of working and 3% of unemployed people.

⁹ Bifron: „Biuletyn Informacyjny” 2005, No 5–6, p. 6.

¹⁰ Deeply rooted prejudice and stereotypes have bigger significance in recruiting potentially new employees than their actual qualifications. Employers also know neither the regulations concerning the employment of the disabled nor the system of encouraging to such employment.

over-average aspirations, such as the actions of universities to broaden the access to education for disabled youth.

Professional work as the possibility of experiencing one's own competences and effectiveness in action is of crucial significance for all people. Its importance increases in the case of professional and personal aspirations of the disabled. The possibility to fulfill one's own social personality – through certain professional roles – not only enables financial support necessary in life, develops bonds in interactions with people, creates the feeling of social usefulness, and contributes to shaping common responsibility; it also frequently indicates the way of personal development. Disabled people often emphasize their mental need for acquiring profession and satisfying work. It is frequent that they engage in work to prove the environment that they are valuable, ambitious, and that lack of full ability is not a life barrier for them¹¹. These motivation processes are based on self-acceptance which facilitates the feeling of self-esteem and one's own efficiency¹². This works especially when the experienced success makes individuals feel convinced about their real possibilities and encourages taking numerous new tasks. Nevertheless, sometimes disabled people are not emotionally capable of undertaking work or coping with its lack – then their behaviour is dominated by extreme reservation or learnt helplessness. They do not want to undertake jobs or register in appropriate institutions, simultaneously signaling such need and pro-professional readiness. Facing this phenomenon, the openness of work offers (together with a professional system of job advising) turns out to be insufficient and useless, as it does not reach the practice of these to which it is addressed. Such situations occur in Work Offices, which prepare certain aid models but they rarely meet the interest of the disabled. One reason of this may be the fact that recognizing such individual way of development of the disabled, as well as recognizing realistic and long-term development of their abilities or professional career, is not easy. This happens because disabled people must get used

¹¹ Com. A. Ostrowska, J. Sikorska, I. Sufin: *Sytuacja ludzi niepełnosprawnych w Polsce /The Situation of the Disabled in Poland/*. Warszawa 1994, Wyd. IFiS PAN, pp. 9–11.

¹² D. Goleman: *Inteligencja emocjonalna /Emotional Intelligence/*. Poznań 1997, Wyd. „Media i Rodzina”.

to their individual standards, possibilities, predispositions, and abilities – especially when (due to their lacking self-confidence, lowered self-esteem, fear, or other factors) their chances or abilities are not fully discovered, or when they are lowered by no positive experience from the earlier life. Moreover, it is difficult to prepare and accept an adequate (for the disabled) form of help with regard to their possibilities, talents, professional competences and expectations, and their realistic chances of employment in the work market.

These analyses raise a question how young disabled people overcome objective (both individual and social) barriers by responding to county employment offers for them¹³ and to the existing chances of increasing professional qualifications which should enhance gaining more satisfying and better paid jobs. The aid offered in this respect, directed towards socio-instrumental support (in the form of professional consulting, mediating and training of this group of young people), is considered indispensable as the main problems of the people facing unemployment is their lack of appropriate education.

Social and professional expectations and aspirations of the young disabled in the face of unemployment

The analysis of expert literature and active monitoring of the main social problems concerning the disabled allow to observe that the experience of the disabled, especially those who enter or have already entered the period of independence and responsible life, generally do not differ in regard to the scope and dimensions of dysfunction. The results of the studies conducted in the nineties¹⁴, concerning self-esteem and individual experience in handling the symptoms of disability, helplessness or chronic disease (which bring about limited life and economic inde-

¹³ Collecting the data was possible owing to the analysis of the selected aspects of the employment policy of the County Work Office in Cieszyn directed towards the young with disabilities.

¹⁴ A. Ostrowska, J. Sikorska, B. Gąciarz: *Osoby niepełnosprawne w Polsce w latach dziewięćdziesiątych /The Disabled in Poland in the Nineties/*. Warszawa 2001, Wyd. ISP, pp. 54–67, 182–183.

pendence), indicate that over the half of the respondents evaluate their life positively, despite many unfulfilled needs. The source of life satisfaction is mostly the fulfillment of main aims and aspirations in family life, the issues related to the future of children (in case of adults), the family life climate, and the improvement (or no deterioration) of health. To a smaller degree, this satisfaction concerns the activeness in the outer world. Statistically, this state maintains over the next years. Both dreams and life projections of the disabled from several years before and those from recent years¹⁵ suggest a fall in their aspirations (taking into account a bit scarcer life possibilities and perspectives). The plans and expectations indicated by the disabled concern fulfilling their basic material and health needs, often only on the elementary level. This phenomenon seems to be related to the category of psycho-social needs – referred to in Kazimierz Obuchowski's or Abraham Maslow's concepts¹⁶. They indicate that aiming at the fulfillment of the nearest needs, which turn to be prior and most wanted by the man, is natural. However, this cannot mean that disabled people have no plans and dreams which they expect to come true. That is why they count on the help of the nearest environment and some institutions which should meet their needs. Work Office is one of such institutions which should become a bridge between the young and the employment market. The Office's tasks are precise and they particularly concern work agency and career consulting (courses and re-training), as well as directing the disabled (especially those who require social and medical rehabilitation) to a specialist training and rehabilitation centre. The Office cooperates with health pension organs, prepares organizational, legal and economic advising on business (or other) activity, and controls working places of disabled people (together with the territorial Work Inspectorate).

Among these issues, career consulting draws particular attention in the context of current problems of employment policy for the disabled. Such consulting can be treated as "the assistance for the disabled in achieving functional ability and effective adjustment, its aim is to gain

¹⁵ The studies conducted by PEFRON (2002, 2005, 2006) – źródła.

¹⁶ K. Obuchowski: *Galaktyka potrzeb ludzkich: psychologia potrzeb człowieka /Galaxy of Human Needs: Psychology of Man's Needs/*. Warszawa 2000, Wyd. Zysk i S-ka.

the feeling of one's own personal value"¹⁷. This feeling is an integral part of vocational rehabilitation of disabled people¹⁸, mainly by emphasis given to preventing unemployment and promoting the employment of the disabled (not only in the conditions of protected work but also in the free work market). The superior goals are: broadening functional possibilities of the disabled, acting towards better quality of their life and the changes of their consciousness in active creating of their own selves. This occurs through motivation to direct one's own development according to the aims and value system¹⁹ accepted by the disabled person and to undertake optimal and favourable decisions²⁰.

¹⁷ T. Witkowski: *Podstawy doradztwa dla osób niepełnosprawnych /Basics of Consulting for the Disabled/*. (In:) A. Januszewski, Z. Uchnast, T. Witkowski (eds): *Wykłady z psychologii w KUL /Lectures on Psychology at Lublin Catholic University/*. Lublin 1991, Wyd. KUL.

¹⁸ Vocational rehabilitation is "a part of general rehabilitation and consists in providing a disabled person with such services as: career consulting, career training, and employment, in order to enable this person to acquire, maintain and be promoted in an appropriate job; thus, to enable the integration or re-integration into normal social life". Quoted in: : *Recomendation no 168 Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) International Labour Organisation*. Geneva 1983; T. Majewski: *Problemy rehabilitacji zawodowej i społecznej osób niepełnosprawnych /Problems of Vocational and Social Rehabilitation of the Disabled/*. (In:) W. Dykcik (ed.): *Pedagogika specjalna /Special Pedagogy/*. Poznań 1997, Wyd. Naukowe UAM, p. 348.

¹⁹ M. Jedynak: *Poradnictwo zawodowe dla osób niepełnosprawnych jako ważny element edukacji, rozwoju indywidualnego oraz integracji /Career consulting for the disabled as an important element of education, individual development and integration/*. (In:) M. Chodkowska (ed.): *Wielowymiarowość integracji w teorii i praktyce edukacyjnej /Multidimensional Character of Integration in Educational Theory and Practice/*. Lublin 2003, Wyd. UMCS, p. 146.

²⁰ Such advising comprises for instance: characterization of jobs, educational possibilities, indications and contraindications to performing them, it presents the situation on the work market and legal regulations concerning employment and the likelihood of getting employed. Moreover, advice is provided with the use of methods which facilitate the choice of career and it includes examining the interests, vocational abilities and the change of qualifications. More on this issue in: Cz. Noworol: *Narzędzia oceny zawodowej osób niepełnosprawnych /Tools of vocational evaluation of the disabled/*. (In:) T. Majewski (ed.): *Poradnictwo zawodowe dla osób niepełnosprawnych /Career Consulting for the Disabled/*. Warszawa 1997, Wyd. KIGR, pp. 48–49.

Work agency and career consulting for the disabled, as well as their training and re-training, are the duty of specialist services within county work offices and voivodeship centres for employment and rehabilitation of the disabled (created at regional work offices). The studies carried out on free work market by PEFRON pointed at main inner barriers in firms which inhibit the practice of employing the disabled: the lack of appropriate jobs, too high work pace, the necessity of workers' mobility and flexibility (with simultaneous legal limitations of work time), architectural barriers, and, what seems particularly important, too low educational level²¹. In this article, the focus is on the data concerning work agency and career consulting, addressed to the registered disabled people with different levels of education.

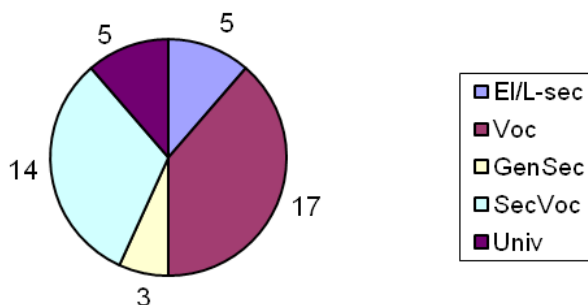
Referring to the life situation of the disabled and the work market reality, it is difficult to estimate the current number of young disabled people in Cieszyn and Cieszyn County who might use aid offers concerning the choice of their own life and work activity²². Thus, it can only be indicated that, in 2007, 94 job offers (addressed only to the disabled) reached the County Work Office in Cieszyn. The information was spread and 351 registered disabled (interested in undertaking work) were directed to respond the offer, including 44 people aged below 30 (with the prevailing number of the young aged 24–30). The data is illustrated by Figure 1.

²¹ W. Ratajczyk: *Osoby niepełnosprawne a wykluczenie społeczne – bariery dostępu do pracy /The disabled and social exclusion – barriers in work access/*. „Problemy Społeczne” 2005, No 9–10, p. 29.

²² There is no possibility to specify and verify the number (both reliable and estimated) of disabled people in Cieszyn and Cieszyn County, especially at the age considered in this work. This takes place as only fragmentary data can be obtained on the basis of the population census, the evidence of Social Insurance Institute (ZUS) concerning people benefiting from allowances and the evidence of the County Centre for Family Aid, because many disabled people do not register at any institution which could offer help. The information comes from 2002 and has been prepared by the Main Statistical Office (GUS).

Figure 1.

**Young disabled people and work offer in
regard to education – 2007**



El/L-sec – elementary/lower-secondary, Voc – vocational, GenSec – general secondary, SecVoc – secondary vocational, Univ – university

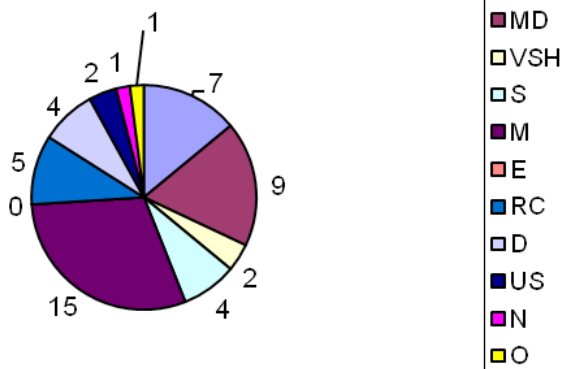
Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

These were mainly people with motor dysfunctions, and – in a smaller number – people with mental retardation, sight and digestive system disorders. In this period, only two persons undertook work. This seems modest when compared to 2006, when the offer for the disabled was richer²³ and mainly people with sight and motor disorders made use of it, as well as people with respiratory system and circulation diseases and neurological disorders. Among them, there were people with vocational and secondary vocational education. The tendencies observed in both quoted years are illustrated in Figure 2 and 3.

²³ The data obtained from the Work Office in Cieszyn show that there were 161 offers and 536 disabled people below 30 were directed to respond. In this group, 25 people undertook work, mainly those over 25.

Figure 2.

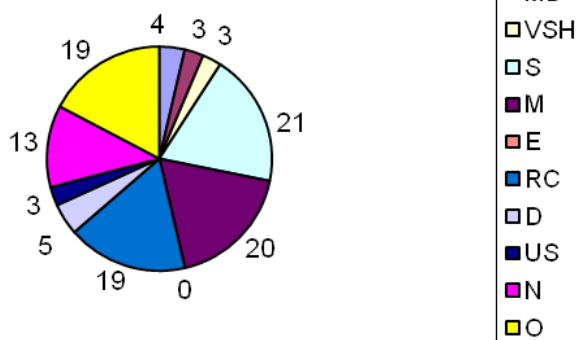
**Young disabled people and work offer in
regard to type of disability – 2007**



Symbols of disability causes: MR – mental retardation, MD – mental disease, VSH – voice, speech and hearing disorders, S – sight disorders, M – motor disorders, E – epilepsy, RC – respiratory and circulation diseases, D – digestive system diseases, US – disorders of the urinary-sexual system, N – neurological disorders, O – others (endocrinological, metabolic, enzymatic, infectious diseases, zoonosis, ugly wounding, diseases of the blood-production system). Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

Figure 3.

**Young disabled people and work offer in
regard to type of disability – 2006**



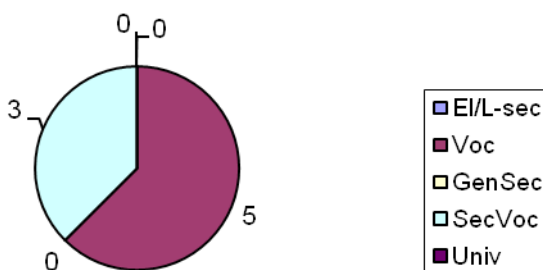
Symbols of disability causes: MR – mental retardation, MD – mental disease, VSH – voice, speech and hearing disorders, S – sight disorders, M – motor disorders, E – epilepsy, RC – respiratory and circulation diseases, D – digestive system diseases, US – disorders of the urinary-sexual system, N – neurological disorders, O – others (endocrinological, metabolic, enzymatic, infectious diseases, zoonosis, ugly wounding, diseases of the blood-production system). Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

As it was earlier highlighted, another area of supporting the development of professional independence is career consulting, within which over the last years (especially in 2006 and 2007, analyzed and illustrated here) a visible increase can be observed in the efficiency of work agency directed to young disabled people. In 2007, 100 people²⁴ (8 people aged 18–30) made use of consultations – they were people mainly with vocational and secondary vocational education²⁵. In 2006, only 41 people (9 in the discussed age period) took part in such advising. The proportions of people with vocational and higher education were similar. At the background of three last years, this year is the only period when the disabled with higher level of education were included into consulting programme. Moreover, a visible rising tendency in this respect may suggest that young disabled themselves start to notice the need for such advice and make use of such opportunities more and more frequently.

The above quoted years 2006 and 2007 present certain changing dynamics of consulting provided for young disabled people (along with the level of their education) – Figure 4 and 5.

Figure 4.

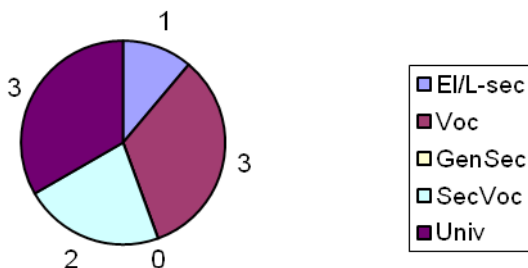
Young disabled people making use of career consulting in regard to education - 2007



El/L-sec – elementary/lower-secondary, Voc – vocational, GenSec – general secondary, SecVoc – secondary vocational, Univ – university. Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

²⁴ The data were revealed for the purpose of the authoress's research by the County Work office in Cieszyn.

²⁵ Moreover, these who were over 25 prevailed.

Figure 5.**Young disabled people making use of career consulting in regard to education - 2006**

El/L-sec – elementary/lower-secondary, Voc – vocational, GenSec – general secondary, SecVoc – secondary vocational, Univ – university. Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

It is worth mentioning that each disabled may be directed to join a course (chosen by this person) in the case when likelihood is presented that this training will contribute (or even ensure) obtaining a job. In 2007, these courses (in training institutions and specialist training-rehabilitation centres) involved 56 disabled people in the discussed age. Moreover, Work Office cooperates with pension system institutions in fulfilling the tasks of training pension service – pension decided by Social Insurance Institute (ZUS) certifies appropriateness of professional re-training. The Office also provides information on the possibilities of obtaining the certificate of disability degree and cooperates with State Work Inspectorate in the field of adjusting appropriate work places²⁶. However, in 2007 only three people benefited from them.

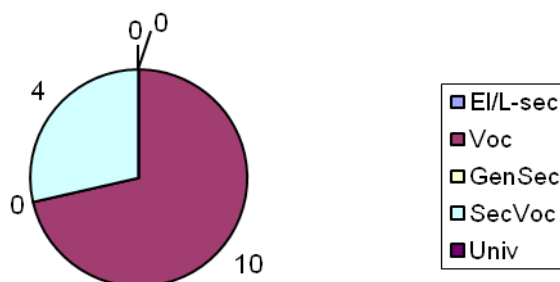
Analyzing the selected aspects of supporting vocational rehabilitation of young disabled people brings about a conclusion that, in everyday practice, a lot of them are not well-informed about the offer of Work Office and the ways this offer can be effectively used. It can be assumed

²⁶ These activities occur with the participation of National Fund for Rehabilitation of the Disabled.

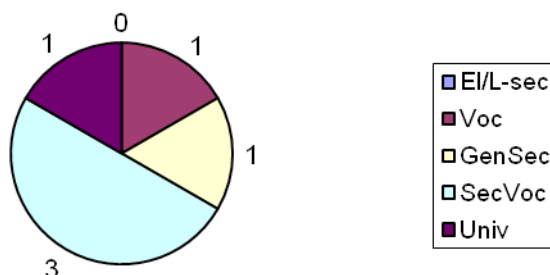
that better educated disabled people will be more conscious and will seek creative developmental strategies as a result of their concern for the future and chances of self-fulfillment. Along with achieving higher education, there should be no cases of helplessness or learnt helplessness in the society (especially in young societies). They are usually manifested in only apparently undertaken actions towards vocational training. Most frequently, this takes place when the disabled person, usually encouraged by family, registers in the office, goes through one of the training stages, and does not undertake the job, or when the employer refuses this candidacy²⁷.

The course of social and professional rehabilitation of young disabled people is determined by many factors, among which some can be considered worrying – for example: the substitute ways of handling the problem, generated by parents or guardians, such as exclusive depending on social benefits (mostly disability pensions) or the lack of motivation to independent activity. Exploring the data concerning provocational behaviour of young disabled people in 2007 provides information that 56 people benefited from training courses. However, there were only 10 people at the age below 30, out of which 5 undertook work after the training. In 2005, there were only 11 beneficiaries (including 4 people aged over 25), out of which only one undertook a job. In 2007, this issue mainly concerned people with vocational and, to a lesser extent, secondary vocational education. It did not refer to the young with higher education. The data are presented in Figure 6 and 7.

²⁷ The case is related to the experience of County Work Office workers, who take part in the process of vocational training of the disabled aimed at undertaking work or re-training in order to get it.

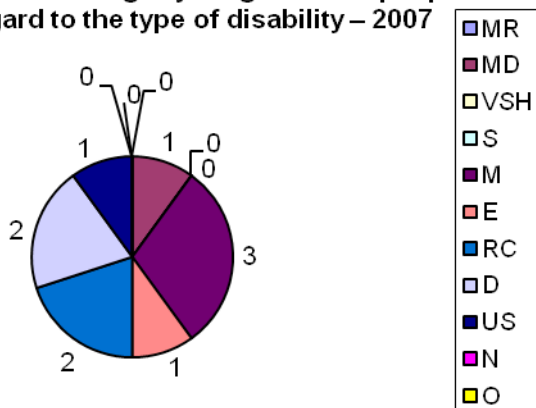
Figure 6.**Young disabled people and vocational training in regard to education - 2007**

El/L-sec – elementary/lower-secondary, Voc – vocational, GenSec – general secondary, SecVoc – secondary vocational, Univ – university. Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

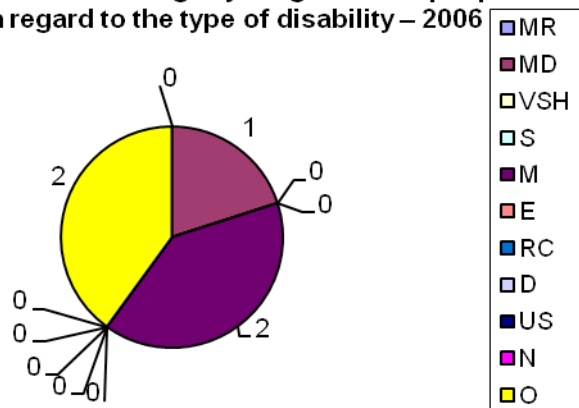
Figure 7.**Young disabled people and vocational training in regard to education - 2006**

El/L-sec – elementary/lower-secondary, Voc – vocational, GenSec – general secondary, SecVoc – secondary vocational, Univ – university. Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

In 2007, the young disabled were clearly more interested in taking part in vocational training than in 2006. The participants of the training were mostly the disabled with dysfunctions of motor, respiratory, circulation and digestive system, who were aged 25–30.

Figure 8.**Vocational training of young disabled people
in regard to the type of disability – 2007**

Symbols of disability causes: MR – mental retardation, MD – mental disease, VSH – voice, speech and hearing disorders, S – sight disorders, M – motor disorders, E – epilepsy, RC – respiratory and circulation diseases, D – digestive system diseases, US – disorders of the urinary-sexual system, N – neurological disorders, O – others (endocrinological, metabolic, enzymatic, infectious diseases, zoonosis, ugly wounding, diseases of the blood-production system). Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

Figure 9.**Vocational training of young disabled people
in regard to the type of disability – 2006**

Symbols of disability causes: MR – mental retardation, MD – mental disease, VSH – voice, speech and hearing disorders, S – sight disorders, M – motor disorders, E – epilepsy, RC – respiratory and circulation diseases, D – digestive system diseases, US – disorders of the urinary-sexual system, N – neurological disorders, O – others (endocrinological, metabolic, enzymatic, infectious diseases, zoonosis, ugly wounding, diseases of the blood-production system). Source: data obtained from Work Office in Cieszyn

The long-lasting phenomenon of work lack among the disabled confirms poorly developed mechanisms or strategies of life resourcefulness of the disabled themselves²⁸. On the other hand, it also shows imperfection and faults of vocational rehabilitation in practice. This takes place due to insufficient effects of existing rehabilitation systems, which focus on restoring (not shaping) the ability to work, treated as the required state, with simultaneous lack of jobs and growing competition in achieving social and professional ranks. Although experiencing self-acceptance and life satisfaction has many sources and not all young people relate it to satisfaction brought by the level of education or the expected or performed job. For many people, these areas of their own activity become an important stimulus and facilitator of further self-development.

Ending

What should become an important stabilizer in the situation of employment of the disabled is their education. A higher level of qualifications is expected to cause growing consciousness of important life matters and potentially better resourcefulness in life. This is manifested not only in more efficient work hunt, but also in the search (done through various institutions) for available forms of vocational re-training. Such search aims at better work satisfaction and fulfilling life plans and expectations, both the nearest and those concerning more distant future. The conducted studies suggest that the people with vocational and secondary education are most numerous in the group of the young disabled who seek work. Thus, it is important that youth would like to learn in order to gain better professional stabilization in the future. It seems also of crucial significance that social behaviour of young disabled people (especially in difficult or rare situations) should develop active forms of struggle for self-fulfillment in their anticipated future, instead of the feeling of learnt helplessness and expecting pension benefits, privileges and other favours.

²⁸ This may result from individual problems associated with an actual barrier caused by the size of dysfunction, low self-esteem, or acquired and environmentally imprinted attitudes of social passiveness.

Work market, as one of systemic solutions of help forms, does not solve many important social issues, including the rapidly growing problem of human disability. This can be verified by the results of research done into these issues which indicate that (quite frequently) the practical aspect of employment policy substantially limits pro-vocational activity of the disabled. This places the group (objectively considered weaker) in the situation of subordination and being dominated.

In search for more pro-developmental formula of changes (feasible in practice), a special role of education can be indicated. For disabled youth, education ought to become not only a supporting system in the process of gradual acquisition of personal (legal) and economic independence. First of all, it should contribute to stronger feeling of autonomy and orientation towards one's own self and to achieving social and professional competences in order to handle more effectively the fulfillment of one's life plans and expectations. Even though this social readiness depends much on individual ability to organize and use life experience, as well as on "cooperation with others in undertaking and solving various tasks"²⁹ and on health and fitness, the possibility of getting a life chance and fulfilling plans and expectations becomes here an issue of particular significance. It gives the young the feeling of group belonging and makes them feel satisfaction related to their own activity and to the acceptance of responsibility for the implemented and emotionally shared socio-professional role. This may also be the result of experiencing rich interactions with the social environment.

²⁹ K. Obuchowska: *Autonomia niepełnosprawnej młodzieży /Autonomy of disabled youth/*. (In:) J. Fenczyn, J. Wyczęsany (eds): *Problemy edukacji i integracji osób niepełnosprawnych ze społeczeństwem /Problems of Education and Integration of the Disabled with Society/*. Vol. 3, Kraków 1994, Wyd. PSON ZG „Ostoja”.